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ABSTRACT

A study examined the effectiveness of a program for improving student writing skills by using whole language. Targeted population was a fifth grade class of 30 students in a stable middle class, suburban community, located in Rockford, Illinois. Writing deficiencies were documented through data gathered from norm referenced tests, quality and quantity of assignments completed, reviews of student portfolios, and a student survey. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students had not had adequate instruction in the different types of writing nor in the steps of writing. These students also had low expectations and did not see themselves as writers. They had not had the opportunity to reflect on their writing in a meaningful way. A review of solution strategies suggested by professionals in the writing field, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in implementing authentic writing units, introducing a writers' workshop, having each student keep a writer's portfolio, allowing for frequent teacher/student conferences and self-assessment, and setting up peer critiquing. Evidence showed that students, as a whole, improved in their writing ability. The quantity, quality, and variety of writing increased as evidenced by improved test scores on standardized tests and teacher observation of writing samples. The amount of writing that students produced increased as measured by counting the number of completed pieces in students' collections of their written work. (Contains 35 references, and 5 tables of data. Appendixes contain survey instruments, an editing checklist, and a writing rubric.) (Author/SR)

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IMPROVING STUDENT WRITING SKILLS
BY USING WHOLE LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight
Field-Based Master's Program

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Abstract

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Date: May 1, 1995

Title: Improving Student Writing Skills By Using Whole Language Instruction

Abstract: This report described a program for improving student writing skills by using whole language. The targeted population was a fifth grade class of thirty students in a stable middle class, suburban community, located in northern illinois. The writing deficiencies were documented through data gathered from norm referenced tests, quality and quantity of assignments completed, reviews of student portfolios, and student survey.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that students had not had adequate instruction in the different types of writing nor in the steps of writing. These students also had low expectations and did not see themselves as writers. They had not had the opportunity to reflect on their writing in a meaningful way.

A review of solution strategies suggested by professionals in the field of writing, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in implementing authentic writing units, introducing a writers' workshop, having each student keep a writer's portfolio, allowing for frequent teacher/student conferences and self-assessment, and setting up peer critiquing.

Evidence showed that students, as a whole, improved in their writing ability. The quantity, quality, and variety of writing increased as evidenced by improved test scores on standardized tests and teacher observation of student writing samples. The amount of writing that students produced increased as measured by counting the number of completed pieces in students collections of their written work.

Table of Contents

Page

Abstract i

Chapter

I Problem Statement and Community Background 1

General Statement of Problem 1

Immediate Problem Context 1

The Surrounding Community 3

Regional and National Context of the Problem 4

II Problem Evidence and Probable Cause 7

Problem Evidence 7

Probable Cause 11

III The Solution Strategy 17

Review of the Literature 17

Project Outcomes 29

Solution Components 30

Action Plan 31

Methods of Assessment 34

IV Project Results 36

Historical Description of Intervention 36

Presentation and Analysis of Results 39

Conclusions 45

Recommendations 46

References Cited 47

Appendices 50

Appendix A..Written Language Survey 51

Appendix B..Writing Survey 53

Appendix C..Editing Checklist 54

Appendix D..Creative Writing Rubric 55

Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

General Statement of the Problem

The students in the targeted fifth grade class exhibit inadequate writing abilities, resulting in poor quantity, quality, and variety of writing, as evidenced by low test scores on standardized tests and teacher observation of student writing samples.

Immediate Problem Context

The elementary school is a suburban school located on 14.4 acres of land in the southeast quadrant of Rockford, Illinois. The 498 students who attend the school have an ethnic and racial population dissimilar to that of the district and state: 78.9 percent (67.4 percent, district; 65.5 percent, state) Caucasian, 13.1 percent (23.7 percent, district; 20.8 percent, state) Black, 4.8 percent (6.0 percent, district;10.7 percent, state) Hispanic, 2.6 percent (2.6 percent, district; 2.8 percent, state) Asian/ Pacific Islander, 0.6 percent (0.3 percent, district; 0.1 percent, state) Native American.

The percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch is 28.3 percent as compared to 30.5 percent and 30.3 percent for the district and state. The percentage of students who are eligible for bilingual education

because of limited English proficiency is 1.4 percent as compared to 2.8 percent for the district and 5.0 percent for the state.

Students at the school have a 95.6 percent attendance rate as opposed to 92.5 percent and 93.4 percent for the district and state. The student mobility rate is 19.0 percent as compared to 22.4 percent for the district, and 20.0 percent for the state. The percentage of students who are chronically truant is 3.1 percent, 8.6 percent, and 2.2 percent for the school, District #205, and Illinois respectively.

Class sizes vary from 21.7 students in the kindergarten classes to 29.0 students in the sixth grade classes. Teachers at the third grade level spent 143 minutes per week teaching English, while the district average at third grade is 150 minutes and 148 minutes in the state. At the sixth grade, there is a considerable disparity: 140 minutes at the school, 125 minutes at district level and 110 minutes at the state level.

The Rockford School District has a teacher population comprised of 92.7 percent Caucasian, 4.9 percent Black, 1.2 percent Hispanic, 0.8 percent Asian/Pacific Islanders and 0.3 percent Native American. Illinois has a teacher population of 83.9 percent Caucasian, 13.2 percent Black, 2.3 percent Hispanic, 0.6 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1 percent Native American. The teaching staff at the targeted school is 100 percent Caucasian.

In District #205, 18.4 years is the average level of teacher experience and $39,996 is the average salary earned, while in Illinois, 16.0 years is the average level of teacher experience and $38,809 is the average salary. Statewide, 46.5 percent of teachers have a master's degree or above, while in Rockford, 67.5 percent of teachers have a master's degree or above (School Report Card).

The Rockford School District demonstrates a history of financial difficulties based on insufficient revenues, inadequate leadership, and a lack of community

support. A lawsuit filed in May, 1989, in the U.S. District Court charges the district with long-time discrimination against minority students. An interim agreement is currently being implemented in the school district to make eastside and westside schools more equitable. This order provides monies to be used for inservices and materials for designated schools, and calls for three magnet schools. The magnet schools draw majority students to predominantly minority areas while minority students can choose to attend schools in predominantly majority areas through voluntary transfers.

Seventy-seven percent of the 39 elementary schools are integrated under the district's voluntary transfer program, with 27.9 percent of the elementary students attending schools other than in their own attendance areas. All middle schools and all high schools are integrated for the present school year. Bussing of minority students to the targeted school helps the school to maintain desegregation guidelines. The targeted school is designated as a C-9 school, which means that it is not identified by the desegregation law suit.

New community interest in shaping the educational goals of the district has resulted in an ad hoc committee of concerned citizens who are forming groups to discuss concerns about the school system and to offer suggestions for improvement. A major structural change is in progress, resulting in site-based management replacing the basic centralized school organization of previous years.

The Surrounding Community

This study was conducted in Rockford, the second largest city in Illinois. Located 92 miles from Chicago to the southeast and 92 miles from Milwaukee to the northeast, Rockford is 92 miles from Iowa to the west. Located along the Rock

River in north-central Illinois, Rockford is 14 miles from the Wisconsin boarder to the north. The city covers 50 square mile area within a 803 square mile metro area (Rockford, Illinois Fact Sheet).

Historically a manufacturing city, there are high employment concentrations in machining, metal working and transportation equipment industries. Additional sources of employment include services, retail trade, government, wholesale trade and others (Rockford, Illinois Fact Sheet).

The 1990 census lists 140,003 residents and shows a per capita income of $14,109 with 13.4 percent of the population below the poverty level. Data on adults 25 years of age and over indicate that 74.8 percent have completed high school and that 18.17 percent have earned a bachelor's degree or above. Higher education in the community is available at a two-year community college, a private four-year college, and a university approximately 40 miles away. There are also several branches of institutions of higher education specialized in medical and business fields (Rockford, Illinois Fact Sheet).

State and National Context of the Problem

In 1990, President George Bush and the nation's governors adopted new goals for education, including the goal that every adult American would be literate by the year 2000. Literacy was defined as the ability to read and write at the fifth grade level. Many young adults are going through many years of formal schooling in reading and writing and yet can not read or write at the minimal level. This has far reaching affects for employability and maintaining a household.

The inability to effectively communicate in writing and in other forms can lead to frustration and lowered self-esteem (Rico, 1983). This in turn sets up a cycle of unhappiness and dissatisfaction that includes feelings of failure. The

prisons are full of people who fall into this category (Norris, 1986). Some authorities in some states are considering making parole from prison dependent upon completion of minimum reading and writing standards (Suvak, 1989). Illiteracy has become such a problem in this country that it has affected almost all aspects of our society.

Teachers have not been able to reach all students to teach them to read and write at a level that allows them to function successfully as adults. The school systems can not be allowed to continue to let these people enter society as adults without the tools necessary to be successful. They must be able to read and write well enough to maintain employability and carry out the day to day tasks that require reading and writing. If what teachers have tried in the past doesn't work, new methods of instruction must be developed and attempted.

Students often have problems with written expression, including productivity and fluency (the amount written, mechanics, spelling, punctuation, handwriting, etc.), syntax (sentence complexity), vocabulary (the degree of sophistication in choosing words), and content (the originality of ideas, organization of thought, and stylistic maturity) (Isaacson, 1987; Nodine, Barenbaum, & Newcomer, 1985; Thomas, Englert, & Gregg, 1987). Students do not seem to be aware of the roles of audience and text structure in planning, organizing, writing, editing, and revising compositions.

An idea that the language arts - listening, reading, writing, and speaking - should be integrated and that many subject areas could be incorporated into a well planned language arts block is a concept that is becoming increasingly adopted by more school districts and by more teachers. A move from the use of the traditional basal reading and language arts textbook approach, to one using novels and process writing has become a trend in the United States. Increasing

numbers of teachers are attempting a whole language approach to writing and reading.

In most schools, teachers interrupt the learning cycle in writing just at the point where students stand the best chance of moving toward fruitful discoveries (Johnston, 1983). Through the whole language approach, students get the most from their reading and writing by combining the two and basing the writing on what is read. Students continue to edit and improve their writing by maintaining a portfolio. Writing-across-the-curriculum and the whole language approach may be successful strategies to improve student writing skills.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), an assessment program funded by the U.S. Department of Education, reported in 1979 and 1984 that there is cause for concern. The 1984 report provides these findings: among 17-year-old students, only 28 percent can write adequate persuasive prose, 38 percent can produce a detailed and well-organized description, and 24 percent can clearly describe an imaginative situation. Among 13-year-old students, only 19 percent can write adequate informative prose, 18 percent can write an adequate persuasive letter, and 17 percent can write adequate imaginative description. Among 9-year-old students, 3 percent can write informative prose, 5 percent can write imaginatively, and 34 percent can write persuasive letters (Olson, 1986).

Reports of findings such as these have provided impetus for a movement toward encouraging writing in all subjects at all grade levels. Gamble (1986), in the NEA publication Education in the 80's, predicts that writing across the curriculum will be the major educational thrust. She contends that research findings in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States during the 70's indicate that learning in all disciplines can be enhanced when writing is taught as a process (Gamble, 1986).

Olson (1986) contends that while students frequently do not have classroom opportunities to engage in the top three levels of Bloom's taxonomy, writing offers numerous opportunities for students to engage in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Data indicating the extent of the problem was gathered from the targeted 5-A fifth grade classroom during the first week of September, 1994. A sampling of writing products was produced by twenty-five students. The same students produced a Written Language Inventory (Appendix A), and a Writing Survey (Appendix B).

The writing samples were narratives of students' choice. Sixty percent of the samples were of ten written lines or fewer. Only four percent were longer than one page. Spelling mistakes in the narratives went unchecked as no students referred to dictionaries, which were plentiful in the classroom. In the narratives, spelling errors ranged from an error for every three words written to one error for every twenty words written. For this purpose, a word was defined as a single unit of characters having meaning. All papers contained errors in punctuation when checked for ending punctuation, commas, and quotation marks. Forty percent had two errors, and sixty percent contained between three and ten errors. Sixty percent had no indication of paragraph usage. No students re-wrote the assignment in a final form, and no students used peers in proximity to help edit in a productive way. No students showed evidence of prewriting even when asked to turn it in, if possible, with the final assignment.

On the written language inventory, on which students commented on their ability to write, twenty percent reported being uncomfortable with the writing process. Another sixty percent reported being somewhat insecure with the writing process. Twenty percent reported being secure with, and knowledgeable of, the

writing process. If those twenty percent were truly secure with, and knowledgeable of, the writing process, they did not display their talent while actually writing.

Table 1
Number of Students' Responses to Writing Survey

Response Stems	Response	Number of Responses
Students' feelings about writing	Love to write	4
	Write sometimes	16
	Only when necessary	5
What students like to write	Letters	10
	Reports	1
	Poems	5
	Directions	0
	Make-believe	2
	Stories	15
	Songs	2
	Newspaper stories	3
Students' perception of help needed	Spelling	10
	Revision	5
	Rereading	7
	Prewriting	10
	Conducive climate	1
	No answer	2
Students' perception of writing problems	Writers' block	10
	Writing process	10
	No problems	5
Students' perception about improvement	Write more	9
	Revise/Edit more	14
	No answer	2

On the writing survey, only four students reported that they love to write, while five reported that they write only when they have to. Sixteen reported that they like to write sometimes. Ten like to write letters; one likes to write reports; five like to write poems; none like to write directions; two like to write make-believe; fifteen like to write stories; two like to write songs; and three like to write newspaper stories. The students were able to give more than one answer.

The kinds of things that they think will help with their writing are concerned with correcting spelling, for ten students; revising was mentioned in some form by five students; rereading was written by seven students; ten mentioned prewriting activities; one wrote about a conducive climate; and two gave no comment.

When asked about writing problems, five said they had no writing problems; ten said they had writer's block; ten mentioned editing and revising problems. Kinds of things easy to write and hard to write varied as much as the individual students, with no pattern emerging. For nine students, writing more is how they could be better writers; fourteen mentioned editing and revising problems; and two had no answer.

The preliminary data reveals that fewer than fifty percent of the students in the targeted group know where their deficiencies are in writing. Although some report that they know the writing process, none fully availed themselves of that knowledge in actual writing.

Table 2

Stanford Language Scores

Student	% Correct	Raw Score	Mechanics	Expression
1	28	17	12	5
2	35	21	14	7
3	42	25	15	10
4	42	25	16	9
5	47	28	18	10
6	48	29	16	13
7	57	34	20	14
8	62	37	25	12
9	65	39	22	17
10	73	44	23	21
11	73	44	19	25
12	73	44	25	19
13	75	45	22	23
14	75	45	22	23
15	77	46	21	24
16	80	48	25	23
17	82	49	26	23
18	82	49	25	24
19	85	51	24	27
20	88	53	27	26
21	88	53	29	24
22	92	55	29	26
23	93	56	30	26
24	95	57	29	28
25	97	58	30	28

Stanford Achievement Tests show that in the area of language, six students in the targeted group answered fewer than half of the questions correctly; three students answered between fifty-seven and sixty-five percent of the questions

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correctly; ten students answered between seventy-three and eighty-five percent of the questions correctly; two students answered eighty-eight percent of the questions correctly; four students answered between ninety-two and ninety-seven percent correctly. The median score for this group was seventy-three percent. The average score was sixty-seven. This group of targeted students have Stanford Test scores lower than the national average.

Probable Cause

An expert on whole language classrooms told of students' frustrations with writing (Routman, 1991). Students need not bother to tell teachers directly that they dislike writing: their apathy can be felt as they crank out stories that are barely adequate and as they ask "How long does this have to be?" Teachers are not always sensitive enough to realize feelings involved if the only response to stories is red-penned negative marks. Teachers sometimes forget how vulnerable students are as learners and as people, and how easy it is to protect themselves with layers of bored resignation. Instead of thinking honestly and deeply about why students have learned to dislike writing, teachers rush about, pushing, luring, encouraging, motivating, stimulating, bribing, and requiring.

The bitter irony is that schools set up roadblocks to stifle the natural and enduring reasons for writing, and then teachers complain that students don't want to write. The cycle continues. After detouring around the authentic, human reasons for writing, teachers bury the students' urge to write all the more with boxes, kits, and manuals full of synthetic writing stimulants. At best, they produce artificial and short-lived sputters of enthusiasm for writing, which then fade away, leaving passivity. Worst of all, teachers accept this passivity as the inevitable context of teaching (Routman,1991).

Within this cycle of failure, it is absurd to talk about students drafting and revising their writing, or the importance of peer conferences, or new methods for teaching poetry and fiction. The teacher will, quite rightly, not want to hear about ways to encourage a child beyond an early draft, or about the importance of classroom-based research. None of this will sound feasible to a teacher straining against the giant boulder of student resistance. Such a teacher will only want a way to cajole students into checking for periods and capitals, or better yet, relief altogether from the burden of teaching writing. When students resist writing, teachers resist teaching writing.

Beneath layers of resistance, humans have a primal need to write. We, as humans, need to make our truths beautiful, and we need to say to others, "This is me. This is my story, my life, my truth." We need to be heard (Routman,1991, p. 135).

"Data ... suggest to me a picture of rather well-intentioned teachers going about their business somewhat detached from and not quite connecting with the 'other lives' of their students. What their students see as primary concerns in their daily lives, teachers view as dissonance in conducting school and classroom business" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 80). The image Goodlad conveys is of two cogs in a wheel, spinning separately but not touching. Teachers teach, and students watch, glassy-eyed and detached.

Listening to children - taking lessons from them - is essential to the teaching of writing. Archibald MacLeish points out that the "whole situation in a writing course is a reversal of the usual academic pattern. Not only is there no subject, there is no content either. Or, more precisely, the content is the work produced by the students. And the relation of the teacher to his or her students is thus the opposite of the relationship one would expect to find. Ordinarily it is the

teacher who knows, the student who learns. Here it is the student who knows, or should, and the teacher who learns, or tries to" (Moffett, 1968, p. 149).

Much of the language arts curriculum is based on the primitive notion that by naming something, it is mastered (Moffett, 1968). Research gives evidence that knowing the characteristics of ideal finished products has little to do with developing the skills to produce those products. Students may be able to recite the characteristics of a tall tale, but this does not mean that they can write one. English composition is a skill that can be learned rather than a content that must be covered. When teaching English, and certainly, when teaching writing, teachers must become more like coaches of a sport and less like presenters of information.

Many students know their pieces of writing are far from ideal, but they may not know how to make their actual texts more like their ideal ones. By the time many unskilled writers have written three words, for example, they already believe they have made an error (Bechel, 1985). They continually interrupt themselves to worry about spelling, to reread, and to fret. This "stuttering in writing" leads to tangled syntax and destroys fluency.

Because the school day is so segmented, teachers spend an average of 40 percent of their time on choreography (Bechel, 1985). We move the class from one thing to another: "sit there," "come here," "open this book," "close that one," "get such and such out," "put it away," "line up," "sit down," "do this," "do that...." Interruptions shatter the school day, making absorption in a project almost impossible. Children are shuttled in and out of classrooms for music instruction, remedial reading, testing, and computer classes.

The writing process approach requires a radically different pace than people are used to in schools. Time is the scarcest of all resources. Teachers

may feel overwhelmed about how to squeeze writing in on top of everything else. The solution is, instead of squeezing one more thing into the crowded curriculum, take a good hard look at the school day to determine what is no longer needed there.

The research is conclusive. Teaching formal grammar has no effect on the quality of student writing. After an extensive review of the literature on grammar instruction, Braddock, LLoyd-Jones, and Schoer conclude:

> In view of the widespread agreement of research studies based upon many types of students and teachers, the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice of actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Schoer, 1963, p. 34).

> It is extremely improbable that communication skills should be affected at all by instruction in explicit grammar, whether that grammar by traditional or traditional circa 1958, or transformational circa 1965, or the current transformational frontier. Study of the theory of language is probably completely irrelevant to the development of skill in the use of language (Brown,1968, xi).

Cazden, a child language expert from Harvard University, puts it this way, "There is no evidence that learning to be aware of one's tacit grammatical knowledge makes any difference in verbal behavior" (Cazden, 1972, p. 240).

Word usage such as to, too, and two are all they have been taught. Year after year, teachers have looked at students' writing and said, "They have to learn the basics first." Those students may never have the chance to write. The

infrequency with which students write is a major reason for their problems with mechanics and spelling. Writing is an alien activity for many people. Shaughnessy (1977) suggests, in fact, that the single most important fact about young writers is that, although they have been talking every day for many years, they have written infrequently and only under strained situations.

Erickson (1963) says that while students are gaining knowledge of the external world, it is equally important that they gain knowledge of the internal world as well. Vygotsky (1962) contends that writing helps the writer become aware of the self. He also points out that "the higher processes emerging during the cultural development of the child.... have in common awareness, abstraction, and control" (p.97). Furthermore, he states that writing, even in its beginning stages, requires a great deal of abstraction and analysis. Since, as he states, meaning is structured only in relation to forms, by verbalizing an experience we transcend it by seeing it in a larger form. As students learn more about the inner self, explore more ideas, and experience the ownership and pride connected with original writing, they gain self-esteem. In short, as Erickson maintains, students gain greater control over their inner world via writing.

When teachers have their students writing regularly about the subject they are teaching, they find formerly unmotivated students becoming more interested in the subject. Wittrock (1983) states that "when students attribute learning to other people or to factors external to themselves the effort they invest in learning, their motivation, tends to decline" (p.602). On the other hand, when students analyze material, interact with the material, and express their own ideas through original writing, they become more actively engaged in their own learning and thus become more motivated.

When teachers ask students to respond in writing to a lecture, a class discussion, or to text they are reading, students are more attentive. At the same time, students become more responsive. The classroom becomes a more interesting and lively place as students become active rather than passive learners (Hollingsworth and Eastman, 1988). When teachers ask their students to write, they learn more about their students. Knowledge gaps will become more apparent and learning styles will be more visible. There will be more opportunities to make valuable connections with students, both as learners and as individuals. When teachers ask their students to write, they develop more meaningful relationships with their students.

Writing also can be the impetus for collaborative learning among students within the class, a situation which contributes to better relationships and greater learning opportunities (Glasser, 1986). Not only do students learn from the teacher and from the materials, they learn from one another as well. Original writing lends itself to meaningful discussion. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts; the total learning experience to be gained by several students, each writing on a similar topic, is greater than any one student could experience in isolation.

Data reveals that students have not had adequate instruction in the different types of writing nor in the steps of writing. These students also have low expectations and don't see themselves as writers. They have not had the opportunity to reflect on their writing in a meaningful way.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Students develop critical thinking skills, explore their ideas, strengthen and develop greater imaginative powers, and gain self confidence through original writing. At the same time, teachers benefit from such a program by gaining knowledge of students, by helping students become better learners, by stimulating collaborative learning experiences, by motivating students to learn more, and by creating a more stimulating, exciting environment for learning.

Research in writing provides teachers with an understanding of what students must know and be able to do in order to produce a finished piece of writing (Cowan, 1983; Elbow, 1973; Lindemann, 1982; Murray, 1985). Writing is a series of processes, a series of activities, which writers do, and though the labels for these stages change according to different writers, researchers generally agree on what they consist of: prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing. Writing is a recursive, not a linear process - one in which previous stages must be returned to time after time.

Prewriting is what students do to get ready to write. This stage of writing requires talking, reading, thinking, and trying ideas out on paper. Sometimes students draw, sketch, or doodle. Sometimes they develop ideas through activities called brainstorming, clustering, timed writing, looping, and cubing. Sometimes they write in their diaries or journals, or they make lists. They may

respond to aural, visual, or printed materials. They may write questions and find the answers. They may interview others to get information. They begin to consider the needs of their audience and the purpose for the writing.

The time needed for this stage of writing will vary from student to student and different strategies may be effective for different students. Teachers need to teach several strategies and allow students adequate time for prewriting. Teachers are responsible, at this stage, for providing a comfortable, supportive, noncritical atmosphere for writing. Teachers can also help students select topics and generate ideas for writing. This stage generally consumes 75 percent of writing time (Atwell, 1987).

When students have a topic and ideas for writing and have determined the audience and purpose, they begin putting their ideas into sentence and paragraph form with a particular audience and purpose in mind. Writing is hard work and requires a lot of concentration. While writing, students may find they need additional material. Teachers may assist students in finding the materials needed. Teachers may also help clarify audience and purpose of the writing. Teachers can offer a comfortable, sharing environment. The writing may come quickly for a little while and then slow down. Then the writing may flow quickly again. The length of time required for writing will vary with different students (Atwell, 1987).

Revising and editing activities or processes can be divided into two distinct stages because the activities are not the same. Revising means writers add new information, take out unnecessary information, and check to see if the organization and information meets the needs of the audience and the purpose of the writing. Students, at this point, make sentences clearer and read their writing as readers, not as writers. This is the time when they reorganize and refocus their ideas.

They can make the meaning clear by adding new ideas and details, delete extraneous material, reorder, clarify, and substitute information. The goal is always to communicate a message to an audience, in the most effective way possible. The revising of writing requires the ability to become somewhat detached from the product. That is something that many writers cannot do with any facility until they have enough experience in writing and enough confidence in themselves as writers to gain the perspective needed to read as a reader and not as the writer. Teachers can help students become confident critics of their own writing, to learn to read their own writing and determine areas that need additional work, and to judge for themselves the parts of their writing that are good. Teachers can also help students to see that writing is a process made up of many stages and that writers continually refine their writing at each stage. Teachers should offer suggestions for improving writing, such as additional details, changes in organization, paragraph order, or title. Teachers can also act as part of the audience and offer reader-based comments during conferences or peer evaluation sessions. Revising requires higher-level thinking skills, including analysis, synthesis, and evaluation - skills that come with instruction, practice, and maturity.

Editing means checking to see if grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct and meet the standards of accepted written English. At this time, students make their writing ready for publication or presentation outside the classroom. A piece of writing is not complete until the writer has taken it through all the activities necessary for polishing it. Students need to do some of this work independently and some in concert with adults and peers. Teachers can help here by providing dictionaries, grammar reference books, and thesauri in the classroom. Teachers should also teach the necessary grammar and usage rules so the students can edit their work. Ultimately, students need to take responsibility for the content and

the correctness of the writing. As with all stages of writing, revising and editing may take longer for some students than for others. (Caulkins, 1989).

In this stage, the writing is shared with others in some final form. Not all writing needs to be published, and not all writing reaches this stage. Writing may be shared orally in small or large groups, placed on a class or hall bulletin board, submitted for publication, acted out for others, recorded, or mailed to the person for whom it was intended. All students should have opportunities to share some of their writing with others. Teachers at this stage can encourage students to share their writing and inform them of opportunities to publish or to submit writing to contests. Teachers should also provide positive feedback and encouragement to students for their efforts in writing.

One of the most powerful ways to teach each of the five stages in writing is to model each of the stages several times for the students. This entails having the teacher become a writer and sharing the writing experience with the students (Routman, 1991).

When teachers teach students to write, they teach them processes for producing writing. They provide students with time to experiment with each stage in the process. They teach strategies for writing. They teach students to respond to the writing of others in the classroom, and they teach them to take responsibility for the content and correctness of their own writing.

Writing is not a linear process. Writing is not a series of activities that proceed in a step-by-step fashion so often described in grammar textbooks. Writing is a very complex activity requiring higher-level thinking processes and actions from the writer. It is natural, for students learning to write, to stop and start in the course of a piece of writing and to return to a prewriting activity while in the midst of any part of the process. Stopping and starting gives writers new insights

and ideas and is a necessary component of writing. This tendency to revert to prewriting activities during any part of writing has been called by researchers recursive, from the Latin word *recursio*, meaning a return. It is perfectly natural for students to stop and start and to try different activities while in the course of writing. Students will take different lengths of time to complete each part of the process, and it is particularly important that teachers allow adequate time for prewriting and for other parts of the process (Lindemann, 1982).

Furthermore, students do not have to know how to write perfect sentences and paragraphs before they can write whole compositions. They do not have to know how to spell all words correctly or how to read all words they want to write. All students, even those who have not yet learned to read, can write, and they can write whole compositions. Children think at the "whole-level" very early and can tell "whole" stories and ideas from a very young age (Harste, Burke, and Woodward, 1983). Let students express what they can express, even if they have to draw pictures or invent spellings to get the message across.

Learning to write takes a long time - 12 to 14 years for some students and 20 or more years for others (Kirby, 1986). Some people do not become competent writers until they are adults. Writing is not "mastered" during any one grade level. What can occur at any grade level is the development of confidence in the ability to gather ideas and to put those ideas on paper. At any grade level, students deserve opportunities to express their ideas and to feel good about themselves as writers (Hollingsworth and Eastman, 1988).

Writing can be a threatening activity. Putting ideas down on paper involves taking risks. When writing is read by caring individuals in a supportive environment, the risk is worthwhile; when writing is criticized without regard for feelings, writers aren't going to take risks any longer. Teachers should read

students' work with care and respond first with praise, and last with suggestions for improvement. Teachers should always look for good things first; the rest will be taken care of later (Routman, 1991).

Student writing has to be assessed in some manner, and writing assignments are often more difficult to grade than other kinds of student assignments. Much research addresses the subject of evaluation of student writing, and the findings are changing the ways teachers assess what students write. Clifford (1980) summarized research findings on evaluation and found that intensive marking of student papers is inappropriate and counterproductive. Students are overwhelmed and intimidated when every error is marked in red; many students ignore teacher corrections or respond by refusing to write at all. Shaughnessy (1977) reminds teachers that students do make errors as they attempt new forms in writing. Mistakes in writing are a natural part of the learning process and should not result in lowered grades. Furthermore, not marking every error in student writing encourages experimentation and risk taking. Murray (1985) reminds teachers that errors in writing are signs of growth. Kirby (1981) asserts that student writing has traditionally been over-evaluated and suggests that grades should be reduced to the smallest number necessary to measure students' progress toward achieving the main objectives of the program. Kirby reminds teachers that learning to write takes a long time, and that students learn best when evaluated in a supportive fashion.

The implications of this research are that teachers need to take a new look at what they do when they evaluate student writing. Teachers need to ask themselves what they want to achieve through grading and look for ways that will allow them to achieve it.

Two types of evaluation are formative and summative. Formative evaluation may take many forms. Useful forms for evaluating writing include verbal responses, conferences, supportive responses, written responses and peer responses. One of the most productive formative strategies is the verbal response and can be as simple as monitoring students' progress while they are writing. Land and Evans (1987) found, in their research, that among all the practices teachers of writing used to evaluate student work, talking to students about their writing was the most helpful. Conferring with students in conference sessions can take the form of teacher/student, student/student, or small group depending on the needs of the students. One conference strategy is to praise, question, and suggest, making sure to concentrate on the part of the writing process in which the student is involved. Whatever conference strategy is used, the conference is important because it personalizes the writing classroom, making it a place where risk taking is acceptable. When giving supportive responses, draw students out with generous doses of encouragement and support (Duke, 1975). Written responses can be helpful because the writer has a written record of what is thought of the written piece. Peer responses, written or verbal, can be helpful but should not be taken as anything more than recommendations - not instructions for revision. Peer responses, as all responses, should always be kept positive. Successful implementation of peer group participation in formative evaluation is challenging, hectic, noisy, and worthwhile, according to Duke (1975).

Summative evaluation is the evaluation which results in a grade. Letter grades conflict with the objectives in an ongoing writing process because they do not reflect the personal growth that occurs during writing. Since letter grades are inevitable and necessary, the criteria should be clearly understood from the outset, by both the students and teacher. The criteria should be specific and

sufficiently limited so that the students are not overwhelmed. It should mirror the instruction that has taken place so that students know what teachers are looking for. Students should be involved in developing the grading criteria. Kirby (1981) says that when students help to develop the criteria, they are able to understand and accept the grading system. They also can see how to improve as writers. To better reflect the student as total writer, grades should be based on the various kinds of writing. Grades should never be given for work in progress, only on the completed work (Atwell, 1987).

Groups of students can help with the evaluation of students' papers when specific criteria are given and understood prior to the grading. Self-assessment is also important in summative evaluation. Murray (1985) feels that when students have some ownership in the grading process, they are less resistant to the summative assessment of the teacher. The evaluation is less external to themselves, and they are more likely to see beyond the grade to the implications of evaluation for their future writing. Evaluation of all types should be used to support rather than thwart students' efforts (Atwell, 1987).

Writing is scary at any age. Part of the fear in writing is fear of the unknown. Before writers write, they do not know for certain what the outcome will be and how they will feel about the product. Writing is also a process of discovery; thus, writers discover what they think, what they know, and what they will create only when they see the words in concrete form on paper for the first time.

Writers take personal risks when they commit words to paper; they risk showing others a written representation of their thoughts and creations, thoughts or creations that may be impersonal or personal, known or discovered only through writing. Sometimes the risk is in how the ideas are expressed (grammar

and semantics) and sometimes the risk is in what is said in the writing (content). Writing and learning to write are a little less scary in a comfortable environment, an environment that is receptive to students' efforts. A receptive environment includes the physical classroom arrangement and the supplies available for writing, as well as the psychological climate established by the person in charge of the room. A room arranged with adequate space between students' seats so that students can write without others looking over their shoulders contributes to the effort. Supplying paper and pencils without scolding or comment to students who come to class without materials makes writing an easier task. A supportive environment does not just happen by chance; it must be purposefully established, not only by a comfortable room arrangement and supplies that are organized before students arrive in the classroom, but also from the first day of class, after students arrive, when the teacher begins establishing an atmosphere of mutual trust among students and between teacher and students.

In the ideal classroom setting for writing, both the physical and psychological environments carry the same message: that this is a comfortable, caring situation, where it is safe to take risks, where learning, helping, and supporting come first. When establishing a hospitable writing environment, writing supplies should be easily available to all students. It should be clear from the first day of class that students will have equal access to paper and pencils. Students should also know that they will write daily and share their writing with others in the classroom, others in the school, family members, and other adults.

A comfortable classroom environment for writing requires that each student knows a little about other members of the classroom. Cooperative activities, from the beginning of the year, can be invaluable in establishing this environment. Working continuously to make the classroom comfortable for writing enhances

motivation and learning and makes the subject a pleasure for both student and teacher.

To use writing as a means of improving learning in any subject, teachers should be aware of these major ideas emerging from current trends in writing:

1.) Writing is best taught integrated with subject matter.

2.) Writing is a natural expression of learning. Writing activities provide a way to tell what is learned.

3.) Writing is a tool for learning.

4.) Students need daily practice in writing about subject content.

5.) Part of teaching a subject is teaching students how to write and react to information learned about that subject.

6.) Writing and sharing the writing with others reinforces learning (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Routman, 1991).

Until about 1970, academic discourse was the only kind of writing formally instructed in our schools. Academic writing is writing students learn in school and do only for school purposes, such as writing book reports, laboratory reports, research papers, and essays. Many teachers envision only academic writing when considering writing as part of the curriculum (Routman, 1991). While teachers do teach students these traditional forms and engage students in a process as they produce these pieces of writing, academic writing is not the main kind of writing students need to do on a daily basis. Students need to write daily in every class in a more expressive way. They should be given the chance to respond to what they learn in the form of summaries, associations, comments, notes, questions, predictions, journal entries, logs, or free writings (Britton, 1979). These responses can be short, unpolished, ungraded pieces for which students receive points or credit.

What is important about students engaging in expressive writing, is the practice they receive. Bechtel (1985) stresses the importance of daily expressive writing:

> The point of expressive writing is to build the habit of writing, of using pen and paper as an external, deliberate aid to thinking. Many students are completely alienated from their own best writing processes, and particularly the earlier, speculative stages of thinking before form concepts have taken shape. Such students are preoccupied with the judgmental, punitive aspects of writing, having never experienced the freedom or pleasures of making discoveries through writing. Most teachers, on the other hand, have internalized the processes of critical thinking and are more or less able to express coherent and well-formed ideas directly onto paper. Therefore, the notion of using writing in a tentative and uncensured way seems strange and unnecessary to many students and to many teachers. Yet it is quite possible that significant learning occurs only if and when students adopt a speculative frame of mind, allowing themselves to make connections between what is new to them and what they already know. (p.12)

Bechtel states that expressive writing is more than a rehearsal of facts. It involves facts and figuring out how these facts fit with what is already known or experienced. Making connections between what is new information and what is already known provides students with opportunities to discover ideas and reflect on their learning.

When given an assignment, students need to know the audience, the purpose, and the grading criteria. They also need to know whether the writing will

require polishing or if a rough draft will be sufficient. They also need to know how the writing will be shared: in the form of a bulletin board display, small groups within the classroom, whole-group sharing, class booklet or another form. Students should then either hear a discussion of the assignment, write the assignment, or receive a written copy of the assignment (Atwell, 1987).

When teachers use writing assignments as teaching tools, they require students to compose original work rather than fill in ready-made materials, such as worksheets, workbooks, or skill packs. They also require students to discover information through writing instead of listening to lectures or answering textbook questions at the end of a chapter. When writing is used as a tool for learning, students learn to routinely jot down and organize their ideas (Atwell, 1987).

When students write regularly, teachers must know how to integrate writing into their on-going curriculum, how to schedule time for writing, and how to handle the volume of papers. Integration is handled by designing or adapting new assignments and projects in which original writing replaces strategies formerly used that required little original work from students. These provide both time for writing and ways to integrate writing into an ongoing curriculum. Individual student writing folders stored in the classroom provide a convenient method for keeping track of student writing and holding students accountable for their progress in writing. When composing original writing daily, time for writing replaces time formerly devoted to other classroom activities (Calkins, 1986; Routman, 1991).

When students write regularly, both the students' skills in writing and their interest in learning improve. Students stay on task longer during the writing process and exhibit increased personal satisfaction with their work. Their self-

confidence increases because, through their work in writing, they are assuming greater responsibilities for their own learning (Calkins, 1986; Routman, 1991).

Teachers should grade only for the writing skills they have taught. On any one assignment, grade only a few skills. Grade different assignments in different ways, depending on the objectives for the writing. Evaluate writing as positively as possible. After students have written several ungraded drafts, allow them to revise and edit their favorites for a grade. Working with writing that they are especially fond of makes the work of revising and editing proceed faster (Calkins, 1986).

Project Outcomes

The first terminal objective of this problem intervention is related to the quantity of student writing. Teacher observation and standardized tests indicated that students were not producing adequate quantity of written work to show growth in that area. Therefore:

> As a result of changes in the method of curriculum delivery during the 1994-1995 school year, the quantity of student writing will increase to the extent that the students, on average, will show at least one year's growth on the Stanford Achievement Test which was given to students in April 1994 and will be repeated in April 1995.

The second terminal objective was related to the quality of student writing. Teacher observation of student writing samples and standardized tests indicated that students were not producing adequate quality writing to show growth in that area. Therefore:

> As a result of changes in the method of curriculum delivery during the 1994-1995 school year, the quality or student writing will increase to the extent that the students, on average, will show at least one year's growth on the Stanford Achievement Test which was given to students in April 1994 and will be repeated in April 1995.

The third terminal objective was related to the variety of student writing that students were able to produce. Teacher observation of student writing samples indicated that students were producing writing products of a very limited variety. Therefore:

> As a result of changes in the method of curriculum delivery during the 1994-1995 school year, students will increase the variety of written products that they are exposed to and attempt, by at least ten.

In order to accomplish the terminal objectives, the following intermediate objectives defined the major strategic procedures proposed for the problem resolution.

As a result of changes in the method of curriculum delivery during the 1994-1995 school year, writing across the curriculum and whole language writing will be implemented in the 5-A fifth grade classroom.

As a result of changes in the method of curriculum delivery during the 1994-1995 school year, students in the 5-A fifth grade classroom will be exposed to various forms of writing which will result in an increase in the variety of writing products that they produce as observed in students' collections of their written work.

As a result of changes in the method of curriculum delivery during the 1994-1995 school year, students in the 5-A fifth grade classroom will be given forty-five minutes of writing time each day which will result in an increase in the amount of writing that students produce as measured by counting the number of completed pieces in students' collections of their written work.

Solution Components

The major elements chosen to produce changes in the writing ability of the targeted students are to implement writing across the curriculum and to teach writing using the whole language method. These strategies were chosen to increase the quality, quantity, and variety of writing used by the targeted students.

These elements directly relate to the terminal objectives in that they attempted to effect a change in the writing ability of the targeted students. Discrepancy data indicated an inability of the targeted students to write with a high degree of quality, quantity, and variety. Probable cause data indicated a lack of knowledge about the writing process and an inadequate opportunity to write original products by the targeted students. Students have not been given adequate feedback about their writing and have not written sufficiently in a climate conducive to writing. Students in the targeted population have also not been taught various writing styles.

Action Plan

The changes in the method of curriculum delivery will include writing across the curriculum and the use of whole language writing. The implementation plan allows for all strategies to be presented concurrently during the 1994-1995 school year from September until March. For all strategies presented, the teacher in the 5-A fifth grade classroom is the facilitator, and the targeted population is the group of 29 fifth grade students in the self-contained classroom labeled 5-A. The following strategies are to be implemented:

1. Introduce writer's workshop in which students have an extended writing time. In this instance students will write each day for 45-60 minutes. Topics are assigned by the teacher, on average, once each week with other writing topics to be student generated.
2. A writer's notebook is to be used by each student as an on-going collection of ideas, personal or exploratory writing.
3. A writer's/author's folder is to contain current and past writing pieces.
4. Writing conferences are one-to-one meetings held on a regular basis with each child to evaluate and discuss student's writing and provide specific instruction.

This is done, on average, once each week with the instructor and as needed with peers.

5. An editing checklist is a list of self-checks for editing to be used by students when necessary.

6. An editor's table is a place to be used by students when necessary where peers help edit writing in preparation for publishing.

7. A publishing center contains materials needed for publishing writing to be used by students when necessary.

8. An author's circle is a circle of students surrounding a writer who is sharing writing in progress for peer feedback. This is conducted as needed, usually during the last ten minutes of writing time.

9. An author's chair is a special place to read finished pieces of writing to an audience and receive feedback. This is conducted as needed, usually during the last ten minutes of writing time.

10. Mini-lessons are brief lessons on writing strategies and techniques which will start each day's writing session and be of five to ten minutes duration.

11. Dialogue/response journals are journals for written responses to literature to be used at least three times each week.

12. Learning logs are notebooks for writing about learning in content areas to be used at least three times each week for writing across the curriculum.

13. Portfolios are on-going systematic collections of students' work and self-reflections. They are added to, as needed, and assessed twice during each nine-week grading period.

14. All of the components of a writing program described above are necessary in a whole language writing program and are used for integrating curriculum.

During prewriting students will:

A. accept an assigned topic and join in individual, small-, or large-group activities to explore prior knowledge of the topic.

B. ask questions and clarify ideas while examining a given topic.

C. choose a topic from a list of suggested topics.

D. share ideas in oral brainstorming sessions in both large and small groups.

E. join in activities such as listing, clustering, questioning, categorizing, timed writing, observation, role playing, hands-on experiences, discussion, and interviewing.

F. put events in sequence.

G. complete one or more prewriting activities independently.

H. read a book for writing a book report.

I. keep a writing journal.

During writing students will:

A. formulate a story line from a prewriting activity.

B. develop like ideas in sentences and paragraphs.

C. select a topic and develop ideas in sentence form.

D. identify the purpose and audience for their writing.

E. write following a model of a specific writing form.

F. write reports following an outline.

G. summarize a reading selection.

H. produce writing that entertains, explains, describes, summarizes, compares, contrasts, expresses an opinion, and persuades.

I. take notes to summarize activities in all subjects.

J. write directions telling how to do things.

K. write an essay with a specific beginning, middle, and end.

During revising and editing students will:

A. read their work for flow of the words and clarity of the idea.

B. determine additional information that may be included in their writing.

C. eliminate inappropriate or unnecessary information in their writing.

D. accept and act on suggestions for changes from peers.

E. conference with the teacher and other adults, then act upon the suggestions.

F. use other's responses as editing and revising tools.

G. add interest to writing by varying sentence structure, sentence length, and word choices.

During publishing students will:

A. read their own writing in small and large groups in the classroom.

B. share writing with adults.

C. accept seeing selections of their writing posted on a classroom bulletin board or printed in a class book.

D. enter writing contests.

E. submit writing to children's publications.

F. give a booktalk to a small group or to an entire class.

G. send correspondence when appropriate.

Methods of Assessment

A variety of assessment methods will be used during the intervention. During the intervention, formative assessments will be on-going as part of the writing process. They will include informal verbal responses and conferences between teacher and students on a one-on-one basis. Peer conferences will also be utilized extensively along with self-assessment. Summative assessment will include graded assignments, with the help of rubrics designed by the teacher,

with input from students. Peer grades will also be useful in assessing learning and growth. Self-assessment will also be helpful to students as well as to the teacher.

To assess the effects of the intervention, teacher observation and graded assignments will be used along with standardized testing. The Stanford Achievement Test was given in April 1994 to twenty-five of the twenty-nine students in the targeted population and will be repeated in April 1995 for all the students in the targeted population.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase the quality, quantity, and variety of writing. The implementation of writing across the curriculum and whole language writing was selected to affect the desired changes. This included authentic writing units, a writer's workshop, writer's portfolios for each student, peer critiquing, frequent teacher/student conferences and self-assessment.

At least four sessions of 45 - 60 minutes were spent writing each week. The intervention lasted from the first week of the school year until the end of the third nine week grading period.

Authentic writing units included narrative, persuasive, and expository writing for various audiences. Students were able to choose their own topics about 80 percent of the time. Each student kept a notebook that was used as an on-going collection of ideas, and personal or exploratory writing. Each student also maintained an author's folder that contained current and past writing pieces.

Dialogue/response journals were used at least three times each week to respond to literature as it was read. Reading was primarily from classical literature and popular novels. Learning logs were spiral notebooks in which students wrote about what they learned in content areas. The teacher/researcher

of this group of students co-taught with another teacher who taught social studies to this group. The co-teacher chose not to use learning logs, so these students used the learning logs for all curriculum areas except social studies. The teacher/researcher taught math, science, and language arts to the targeted group of students each day. The language arts included the study of literature and the development of skills in spelling, reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Students collected work and self-reflections in portfolios. Students were free to add to their portfolios as they wanted. Some samples in portfolios were required, while most were student-selected. Portfolios were assessed twice during each nine-week grading period.

The writing session started each day with a mini-lesson on writing strategies and techniques. Each mini-lesson lasted five to ten minutes and covered the scope and sequence of the language book. Students only used the language book as a reference book and did not complete lessons from the book. After mini-lessons, students were encouraged, but not required, to attempt to incorporate the strategies and techniques learned in the mini-lessons.

Students separated the writing process into pre-writing, writing, revising, editing, and publishing. During prewriting, topic ideas were generated in many ways. Students sometimes formed groups to discuss and explore prior knowledge of a topic. Students were encouraged to ask questions and share ideas in brainstorming sessions. Activities such as listing, clustering, categorizing, timed writing, observation, role playing, hands-on experiences, reading, sequencing, journaling, discussion, and interviewing were used.

After prewriting activities generated ideas, students selected topics, wrote stories, combined like ideas into sentences and paragraphs, wrote reports from an outline, wrote directions, and summarized. Students were asked to write to entertain, explain, describe, summarize, compare, contrast, express an opinion, or persuade.

Writing conferences, one-to-one meetings, were held on a regular basis with each student to evaluate and discuss student's writing and provide specific instruction. This was done about once each week with the instructor/researcher and as needed with peers. Some students availed themselves of peer conferencing often while others rarely asked for peer input on their writing. Language books provided by the school district were abandoned as text books from which to work. Students were encouraged to use them as reference books. An editing checklist, a list of self-checks for editing, was used by students when necessary. See Appendix C.

A publishing center containing materials needed for publishing writing was set up for student use along with an editor's table where peers helped edit writing in preparation for publishing. Students read their work for flow of words and clarity of ideas. They had to show a specific beginning, middle, and end in each piece of writing. Students determined additional work that could be included or extraneous information to be eliminated. Students were encouraged to add interest to writing by varying sentence structure, sentence length, and word choice. The teacher, other adults, and peers offered suggestions for changes which were then acted upon. The editor's table was essentially abandoned in favor of peer editing by sitting on the floor in the corners of the carpeted classroom.

An author's circle was formed whenever a writer wanted to share writing in progress for peer feedback. This usually happened during the last ten or fifteen minutes of writing time. A more formal sharing of written work occurred when a piece of written work was completed. A special author's chair was used by the writer as a special place to read finished pieces to an audience and receive feedback. As with the author's circle, the author's chair was utilized during the last ten or fifteen minutes of writing time. Not all finished pieces of written work were shared in the author's chair. Some pieces were shared with adults - parents and teachers; some were published in the school newspaper or posted in the classroom; some pieces were entered in writing contests or submitted to children's publications. Some pieces of written work became the basis of booktalks in class or were appropriate to send as correspondence.

Assessments during this intervention were varied. Formative assessment included informal verbal responses and one-on-one conferences between the teacher and students. Peer conferences and self-assessment were also utilized extensively. Summative assessment included graded assignments. Rubrics were designed by the teacher with input from students. An example is in Appendix D. Peer grades and self-assessment helped determine growth and learning. Teacher observation and graded assignments were used along with standardized testing.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of writing across the curriculum and whole language writing on the quality, quantity, and variety of student writing, the same Written Language Survey (Appendix A), and Writing Survey (Appendix B), were

given in March 1995. The results of the Writing Survey are shown in Table 3. Students improved their attitude about writing and had a clearer perception of what they had to do to become better writers.

Table 3
Number of Students' Responses to Writing Survey

Response Stems	Response	Number of Responses	
		Before Intervention	After Intervention
Students' feelings about writing	Love to write	4	15
	Write sometimes	16	8
	Only when necessary	5	2
What students like to write	Letters	10	17
	Reports	1	8
	Poems	5	5
	Directions	0	6
	Make-believe	2	23
	Stories	15	23
	Songs	2	7
	Newspaper stories	3	17
Students' perception of help needed	Spelling	10	22
	Revision	5	23
	Rereading	7	22
	Prewriting	10	19
	Conducive climate	1	2
	No answer	2	1
Students' perception of writing problems	Writers' block	10	16
	Writing process	10	4
	No problems	5	5
Students' perception about improvement	Write more	9	2
	Revise/Edit more	14	21
	No answer	2	2

Almost all students responded in a more positive way about writing in general. Two students wrote only when necessary at the end of the intervention. The others wrote sometimes or love to write and do it often. The types of writing samples increased in number, and students reported an enjoyment of more types of writing. With an awareness of how students could improve their writing came an awareness of the type of help they needed. In Table 3, the number of students' responses to the type of help needed increased dramatically as they learned

where they had deficiencies in writing. More students reported having writers' block as their attempts at writing increased. The actual production of written work tripled as measured from the first and last weeks of the intervention. Writers' block appeared to be a thinking time, which is a natural part of prewriting. As students wrote more, they made a correlation between revision and better finished products. They saw the improvement in their writing as a result of revision more than as a result of writing more.

Table 4
Stanford Language Scores

	1994				1995			
Student	% Correct	Raw Score	Mechanics	Expression	% Correct	Raw Score	Mechanics	Expression
1	28	17	12	5	33	20	6	14
2	35	21	14	7	60	36	22	14
3	42	25	15	10	63	38	23	15
4	42	25	16	9	78	47	22	15
5	47	28	18	10	82	49	25	24
6	48	29	16	13	62	37	20	17
7	57	34	20	14	40	36	19	17
8	62	37	25	12	63	38	17	21
9	65	39	22	17	68	41	20	21
10	73	44	23	21	83	50	24	26
11	73	44	19	25	78	47	20	27
12	73	44	25	19	67	40	21	19
13	75	45	22	23	80	48	25	23
14	75	45	22	23	82	49	24	25
15	77	46	21	24	92	55	25	30
16	80	48	25	23	77	46	26	20
17	82	49	26	23	75	45	23	22
18	82	49	25	24	87	52	26	26
19	85	51	24	27	85	51	23	28
20	88	53	27	26	90	54	27	27
21	88	53	29	24	90	54	27	27
22	92	55	29	26	78	47	23	24
23	93	56	30	26	98	59	29	30
24	95	57	29	28	98	59	30	29
25	97	58	30	28	100	60	30	30

Students in the targeted group were given the full battery of Stanford Tests during the second week of April 1995. The Language Arts portion of the test, the tests of mechanics and expression, were hand scored by the teacher immediately

after the tests were administered. The testing conditions were the same as when the targeted group of students took the Stanford Tests in April of 1994. The only notable exceptions are the change of instructor administering the tests and the breakfast that was served each morning during testing week in April 1995. The results are shown in Table 4.

Each of the Stanford sub-tests, mechanics and expression, had thirty possible correct responses for a possibility of sixty correct answers. The percentage correct was computed from the raw score which was the combined scores of the mechanics and expression subtests. Four students had a decrease in raw scores between 1994 and 1995. Twenty students had raw scores increase an average of four points per student. One student had a raw score that did not change. In the area of mechanics, ten students had scores decrease after the intervention; one score remained the same while fourteen scores increased with an average of one point per student. In the area of expression, three scores decreased after the intervention, two remained the same, and twenty scores increased an average of four points per student. One student achieved all sixty correct answers on the Stanford Language Tests. One student received a perfect score on the mechanics subtest, and two had perfect scores on the expression portion of the Stanford Test. The mean and median scores were both seventy-six on the posttest, but had been sixty-seven and seventy-three respectively on the pretest.

Substantial increases were found in the recorded scores on the Written Language Inventory, Table 5. All scores increased with various degrees of success. The teacher and students worked together to gather the information on

Table 5
Written Language Inventory

	Before Intervention			After Intervention		
Topics	Secure	Beginning	Not Yet	Secure	Beginning	Not Yet
Writing Process						
Self-selects topics	9	15	1	25	0	0
Fully developed beginning, middle, end	20	3	2	22	2	1
Reads for information to include in writing	3	5	17	22	3	0
Develops writing topic with details	8	12	5	18	5	2
Summarizes information in own words	3	13	9	22	1	2
Writes narrative essays	14	9	2	21	2	2
Writes persuasive essays	12	10	3	18	5	2
Writes expository essays	11	10	4	21	2	2
Understands his/her own writing process	8	12	5	19	4	2
Writing is meaningful and enjoyable	9	9	7	18	5	2
Prewriting or rehearsal strategies						
Takes notes, makes lists	10	13	2	23	0	2
Collaborates, talks	17	6	2	25	0	0
Uses clustering, mapping	7	4	14	18	4	3
Uses outlines	3	6	16	21	4	0
Rough Draft						
Writes for a purpose and audience	9	12	4	23	2	0
Willing to take risks	2	9	14	19	6	0
Revising						
Initiates revision	0	3	22	19	4	2
Willingly shares writing	5	8	12	20	3	2
Gives and receives advice	6	12	7	25	0	0
Editing						
Self-initiates editing	1	2	22	19	0	6
Uses editing conventions	3	5	17	22	1	2
Publishing						
Sees self as an author	1	2	22	21	1	3
Shares finished piece	2	6	17	21	2	2
Punctuation/Capitalization						
Uses ending punctuation (. ? !)	20	5	0	25	0	0
Uses commas	6	15	4	17	5	3
Uses quotation marks	5	12	8	18	4	3
Uses appropriate capitalization	7	18	0	19	6	0
Grammar						
Uses verb tense agreement	6	12	7	17	2	6
Uses subject/predicate agreement	6	12	7	18	5	2
Uses paragraphs	5	17	3	17	5	3
Varies sentence beginnings	12	7	6	20	3	2
Uses figures of speech	2	15	8	17	3	5
Spelling						
Makes approximations for checking later	7	12	6	21	1	3
Spells many words automatically	12	9	4	19	4	2
Uses resources to check spelling	0	10	15	21	2	2

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Table 5. Some information was gathered from teacher observation, while other information came as a result of interviews. Before the intervention, a mean of seven students and a median of seven students reported being secure in the areas of written language. After the intervention, a mean of twenty students and a median of twenty-one students reported being secure in the areas of written language.

In the area of Writing Process, all students showed an ability to self-select topics; almost all students displayed beginning, middle, and end on papers. Almost all students read for information to include in writing. Students were able to display details and summarize by the end of the intervention. Most were able to write narrative, persuasive, and expository types of essays. Students reported an increased knowledge of the writing process and felt that writing was more meaningful and enjoyable.

Students who had trouble taking notes, collaborating, clustering, and outlining before the intervention, found these rehearsal strategies much easier after the intervention. Students who never wrote rough drafts or revised their writing, were sharing their revised works with the class at the end of the intervention. Punctuation and grammar improved dramatically between the beginning of the intervention and the end. Students were much more likely to check their spelling towards the end of the intervention as compared to the beginning of the intervention.

These same patterns emerge when looking at samples of students' writing from their writing folders. Evidence of prewriting, revising, and editing were

present in almost all of students' later works. The students exhibited a great variety of writing pieces. All students had several examples of each of the three major writing varieties: expository, persuasive, and narrative. Within each of the major areas of writing, each student had at least ten different items to display as examples of their work. The writing samples were of a much greater length at the end of the intervention than at the beginning of the intervention.

Conclusions

After comparing the results of the Writing Survey, the Written Language Inventory, the Stanford Tests, and students' writing samples, evidence showed that students, as a whole, improved in their writing ability. Each of the testing measures used was in agreement with the other testing measures and showed that using writing across the curriculum and whole language writing in the classroom on a regular basis was successful in achieving the desired changes. This included authentic writing units, a writer's workshop, writer's portfolios for each student, peer critiquing, teacher/student conferences and self-assessment at a frequency of four sessions per week and at a duration of forty-five to sixty minutes per session.

As a result of changes in the method of curriculum delivery during the 1994-1995 school year, students in the targeted fifth grade class were successful in overcoming inadequate writing abilities. The quantity, quality, and variety of writing increased as evidenced by improved test scores on standardized tests and teacher observation of student writing samples. Students in the 5-A classroom were exposed to various forms of writing which appeared to result in an increase in the variety of writing products that they produced as observed in students'

collections of their written work. The increase in amount of writing that students produced as measured by counting the number of completed pieces in students' collections of their written work appears to be due to the 45-60 minute writing sessions at least four days each week during the intervention.

Recommendations

Students appeared to benefit from a writer's workshop, writer's portfolios for each student, peer critiquing, frequent teacher/student conferences and self-assessment. Using writing across the curriculum and whole language writing in the classroom on a regular basis was successful in achieving the desired changes. Students did not appear to suffer from not filling in blanks in a Language Arts book during this intervention. The teacher/researcher was able to carry out all the components of the intervention successfully. Others who may want to duplicate this intervention may have difficulty explaining to parents and administration why the district-provided language arts book is not used as intended and is essentially abandoned. As shown by the data, any attempt at duplicating this intervention may produce better results if the language arts book is not used in the traditional fashion: that is, as a drill activity. Data does not support the beneficial use of a fill-in-the-blank language arts book. This traditional use appears to have little carry-over of knowledge to daily student-generated writing. The teacher/researcher will continue to guide students to improved writing by using writing across the curriculum and whole language writing in the classroom on a regular basis.

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Appendices

Written Language Inventory

Fluent Writer (Side 1)

Key
N-Not observed
B-Beginning
S-Secure

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

	Grade/Date				Anecdotal Notes
WRITING PROCESS					
Self-selects topics					
Fully developed beginning, middle, end					
Reads for information to include in writing					
Develops writing topic with details					
Summarizes information in own words					
Writes within all domains: narrative/descriptive informative/expository					
Understands his/her own writing process					
Writing is meaningful and enjoyable					
Prewriting or rehearsal strategies					
Takes notes, makes lists Collaborates, talks Uses clustering, mapping Uses outlines					
Rough draft					
Writes for a purpose and audience Willing to take risks Uses a word processor					
Revising					
Initiates revision Willingly shares writing Gives and receives advice					
Editing					
Self-initiates editing Uses editing conventions					
Publishing					
Sees self as an author Shares finished piece					

Written Language Inventory

Fluent Writer (Side 2)

Key
N-Not observed
B-Beginning
S-Secure

Name: _____

	Grade/Date				Anecdotal Notes
PUNCTUATION/CAPITALIZATION					
Uses ending punctuation (. ? !)					
Uses commas					
Uses quotation marks					
Uses appropriate capitalization					
GRAMMAR					
Uses verb tense agreement throughout writing					
Uses subject/predicate agreement					
Uses paragraphs					
Varies sentence beginnings					
Uses figures of speech					
SPELLING					
Marks approximations for checking later					
Spells a large collection of words automatically					
Uses resources to check spelling					

Appendix B

NAME_____

WRITING SURVEY

THINKING ABOUT WRITING

DIRECTIONS: Read each question below. Answer each question by checking one or more of the boxes or writing on the lines.

1. Do I like to write? (Check one answer.)
   - I love to write.
   - I like to write sometimes.
   - I write only when I have to write.

2. When I write, I like to write...

letters	make-believe
reports	stories
poems	songs
directions	newspaper stories

3. What kinds of things can I do that help me when I'm writing?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. What kinds of problems do I have when I write?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. What kinds of things are easy to write, and what kinds are hard to write?

Easy to Write	Hard to Write
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

6. What can I do to become a better writer?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix C

Revision Checklist

_____ 1. Did I write what I wanted to write?

_____ 2. Is my topic focused?

_____ 3. Will my readers understand what I am saying?

_____ 4. Is my writing clear?

_____ 5. Is my opening strong? Does it capture the reader's attention?

_____ 6. Are my main ideas supported with details? Have I used examples?

_____ 7. Does my conclusion contain a final point or summary for my piece?

_____ 8. Is all my information needed? Are there any words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that I can cut? Have I cut all clutter?

_____ 9. Are there places I can expand my ideas?

_____ 10. Does my piece show unity? Do all of the parts build to a whole?

_____ 11. Are my paragraphs cohesive and unified? Does each one contain only one main idea?

_____ 12. Is the style right for the subject? Is my style consistent throughout the piece?

_____ 13. What part of this piece do I like the best? Why? _____
_____

_____ 14. What part do I like the least? Why? _____
_____

_____ 15. What part do I feel needs improvement? How can I improve it?
_____

Appendix D

Name_____Subject_____Date_____

Creative Writing Rubric

Assignment:_____

Evaluation by: (circle one) Teacher Self Peer Group Other

1. Ideas

Fresh, original Focuses on topic Supporting details	Some original ideas General focus on topic Most supporting details included	Few original ideas Moves away from focus Few supporting details	Incomplete ideas Unfocused Lacks details	No attempt
4	3	2	1	0

2. Organization

Ideas connected Strong beginning, middle, end Sequenced & logical	Most ideas connected Good beginning, middle, end Most ideas sequenced & logical	Some ideas connected Attempts beginning, middle, end Not always sequenced & logical	Few ideas connected Lacks beginning, middle, end Little sequence & logical	No attempt
4	3	2	1	0

3. Word Choice

Wide variety used Consistent and appropriate usage words "enhance" ideas	Some variety Mostly consistent and appropriate Words generally support ideas	Common word choice Some appropriate word choices Little use of descriptive words	Limited word choice Inappropriate word choices No attempt at descriptive words	No attempt
4	3	2	1	0

4. Sentence Structure

Clearly written Complete sentences Variety of sentence length	Most sentences clearly written Simple sentences Some variety of length	Some unclear sentences Run-on, fragmented Little variety	Sentences not clear Frequent fragmented sentences No variety	No attempt
4	3	2	1	0

5. Mechanics

Few or no errors	Some errors	Many errors	Serious errors No variety	No attempt
4	3	2	1	0